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ABSTRACT

The school site is a convenient location for study stations since it is available for short periods of time and can be used consistently. Special preparations, such as transportation, required for off-site fieldtrips can be eliminated. In addition, on-site activities provide students with concrete experiences necessary to understand difficult concepts. Provided are suggestions for developing such study stations. These include an inventory (in checklist format) of possible sites and ways to improve school site (considering establishing a number of diverse natural communities, giving a site time to develop fully, and using native species whenever possible). Brief descriptions of suggested stations are also provided, including brush pile/fence row, boulder field, hill, succession plots, wet area, feeding stations, sand pile, unmowed plot, pine planting, hardwood/deciduous area, outdoor seating area, compost pile, and garden plots. A list of other possible study stations is included. (JN)

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DEVELOPING STUDY STATIONS ON YOUR SCHOOL SITE

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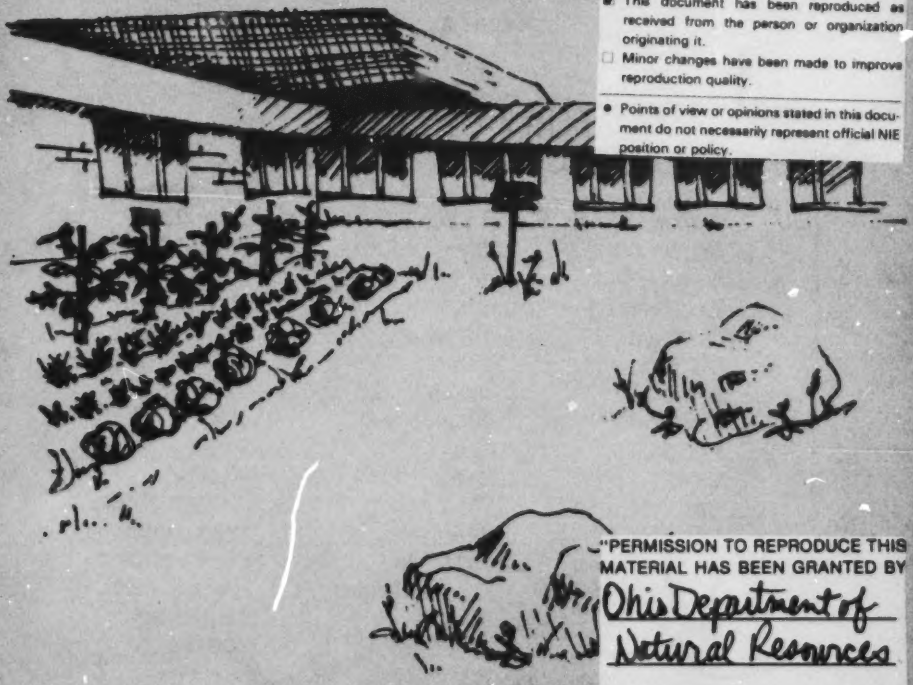

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WHY USE YOUR SCHOOL SITE?

Your school site is convenient, is available for short periods of time and can be used consistently. Special preparations, such as transportation, required for off-site fieldtrips can be eliminated. A major objective should be to make your students more aware of the area they use every day. On-site activities also give students the concrete experiences necessary to understand difficult concepts.

WHAT PARTS OF YOUR SCHOOL SITE CAN YOU USE?

Excellent activities can be designed around many natural and man-made parts of your school grounds. Take a minute to walk the school property and notice the diversity. You may find grass, bare soil, fences, trees, blacktop and wet areas. Each of these has its own unique character and can be used in a variety of ways. The checklist below can be used to inventory potential study stations on your school site.

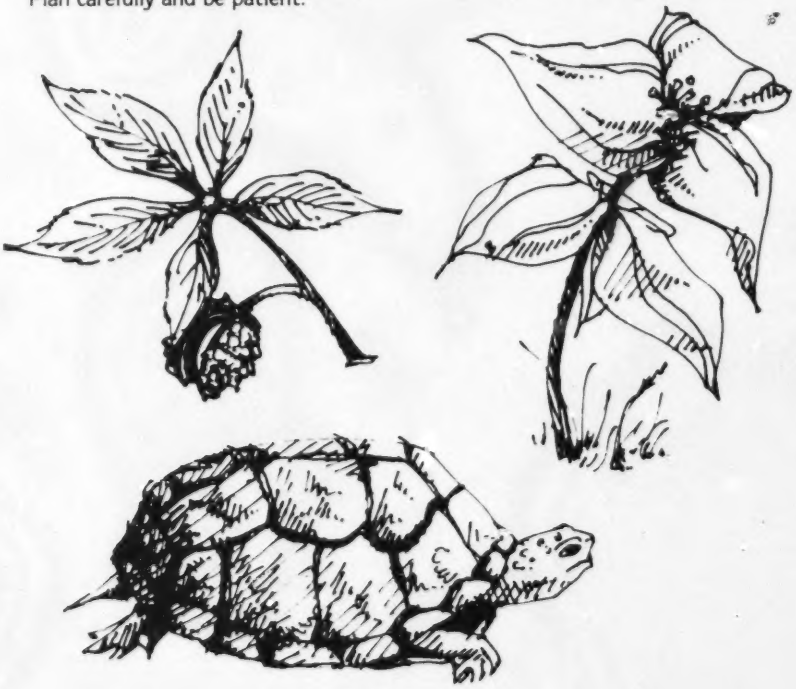
SITE INVENTORY CHECKLIST

____Animals	____Garden	____Rocks and rock outcrops
____Animal homes	____Grass or lawn	____Rotten logs
____Beauty spots	____Hedges	____Sand
____Bird feeders or houses	____Historical markers	____Scenic spot
____Blacktop	____Litter or waste	____Shrubs
____Brush piles	____Mounds and hills	____Sidewalks
____Courtyard	____Nature trails	____Soil
____Deciduous trees	____Oldest thing	____Stream
____Den trees	____Pine trees	____Stumps
____Edge areas	____Plants for food and cover	____Survey markers
____Erosion areas	____Plant succession	____Tree wounds
____Fence rows	____Pond	____Unmowed field
____Flag pole	____Puddle areas	____Uglies
____Flowers		____Watershed
____Foot impact		____Weeds
____Forest habitat		____Wet areas
		____Wildflowers
		____Windbreak

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR SCHOOL SITE?

While your site may already have many spots that can be used for education outdoors, you can enhance those spots or develop new ones. When making changes in your site, you should keep the following points in mind.

- **Establish a number of diverse natural communities.** Because each habitat supports different plants and animals, many new species will come into an area automatically. Unmowed meadows, woodlots, wet areas and edges between habitats encourage diversity.
- **Give your site time to develop fully.** Plantings, wet spots and unmowed areas will not immediately become mature natural communities. Plan carefully and be patient.



- **Use native species whenever possible.** Survival is more likely because the plants are acclimated to the area. Native species may be valuable from a historical perspective. By including indigenous plants and animals you may be able to help save species whose populations are being reduced by habitat changes.

SUGGESTED SCHOOL SITE STUDY STATIONS

A BRUSH PILE/FENCE ROW can provide food, cover and space necessary to attract birds and small animals. These can be islands in a mowed field or along the edge of a wooded area.

A BOULDER FIELD can include ore-bearing rocks, large glacial erratics, fossil rocks and building materials, such as limestone, sandstone or marble. This adds interest to the site and contributes to the study of geology. Smaller rocks for turning over to examine critters can be included in this field and at other stations.

A HILL is ideal for those with a large school yard or needing a place to pile the soil after digging a pond. The hill is useful for giving a different perspective of the school yard, learning mapping skills and illustrating erosion and other physical laws.

SUCCESSION PLOTS can be established by turning the soil over each year. Plant cover that develops can be compared with plots that have been disturbed less often, or not at all. A small area that is hand dug is sufficient for demonstrating succession.

A WET AREA such as a stream, pond or marshy spot will attract larger animals and provide a habitat for frogs, fish and turtles. Existing or naturally occurring areas are often ignored. Consult professionals concerning size, location and materials before constructing a pond.

FEEDING STATIONS for birds and mammals can be placed in a variety of habitats. Feeders along with plant cover placed close to school windows offer more opportunities to observe wildlife.

A SAND PILE that is 10 feet by 10 feet, containing several tons of sand, stimulates creative play and offers a different medium for class projects. Carefully designed activities incorporating land use concepts can be illustrated in three dimensions. A low wall will help maintenance.

AN UNMOWED PLOT can be a small meadow or islands allowed to grow wild in a lawn. Meadow wildflowers, shrubs, critters and birds will soon be found in these areas.

A PINE PLANTING provides a different type of habitat for comparing plants and animals and can illustrate management principles or techniques. Native softwoods and other evergreens can be introduced to add diversity.

A HARDWOOD OR DECIDUOUS AREA should include buckeyes, oaks, maples and other native trees, as well as dead and decaying logs and stumps. Other plants, including shrubs and wildflowers common to forests, will add diversity.

AN OUTDOOR SEATING AREA can be incorporated anywhere on the school property. Benches, large logs or log stools that are comfortable and provide off-the-ground seating should accommodate at least 30 students. Logs can also be used as a study station for comparing growth of annual rings and as a play area for balancing.

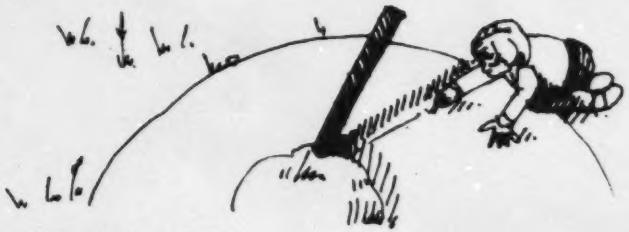
A COMPOST PILE offers an opportunity to observe natural recycling but requires proper construction and management. Care should be taken in planning the location away from the major play areas and in screening it from public view.

GARDEN PLOTS offer an opportunity for students to be active as well as observe change. Careful planning and summer up-keep are essential for success.

OTHER POSSIBLE STUDY STATIONS

Beehive
Tree nursery
Soil profile
Weather station
Windmill
Prairie planting
Bird blind
Orienteering course

Footprint area (portable mud flat)



Sundial (giant or life size)
Challenge or rope course
Benches in quiet areas

Camera poles (permanent, to record same view through changing seasons)
Geometric shapes or maps painted on paved surfaces

For further information and help in identifying potential study sites, contact:

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ODNR
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Outdoor Areas as Learning Laboratories
Alan J. McCormack, ERIC/SMEAC, 1200 Chambers Rd., Columbus, OH 43212

Ohio School Land Labs
Packet available from ODNR Education Section, Fountain Square, Columbus, OH 43224

Planning A Nature Center
Byron Ashbaugh, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022

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